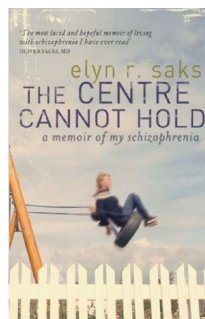


Book Reviews

The Centre Cannot Hold (My Journey Through Madness). Elyn R Saks. Hyperion, New York, August 2007. 352pp. £12.58. ISBN 978-1-40130-138-5



If you walk into any branch of Waterstones, near the biography section there is a section called “Lost Lives”. This is the result of the increasing numbers of memoirs dealing with various types of abuse in childhood and various degrees of subsequent transcendence. The genre has also less charitably been dubbed “Misery Lit”, and described as “the book world’s biggest boom sector.” I am happy to report however that this book doesn’t belong in that section.

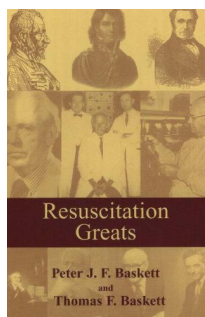
It is in fact a very clear and unsentimental account of one person’s struggle with schizophrenia. This starts with an uneventful American childhood, with only minor obsessional symptoms, before evolving into a full blown psychosis at College. There is a remarkably touching description of her relationship with a Klienian analyst in Oxford, where she had a scholarship, and the continuing story of her successful academic career in the US.

One of the key negative aspects of her experience is the use of physical restraint in her early American hospital admissions. This leaves her with a feeling of dehumanisation and she uses this experience in her subsequent career as a human rights lawyer to help change this practice.

This is a remarkable book, bold and clearly written. I would recommend it to anyone interested in a first hand account of psychosis. It is particularly thought provoking for those of us at the “other side” of the experience. It is not always an easy read but never strays into the more unctuous excesses of the “Misery Lit” genre.

Francis Anthony O’Neill

Resuscitation Greats. Peter JF Baskett, Thomas F Baskett. Clinical Press Ltd, Bristol, October 2007. £25.00. pp380. ISBN 1-854-57049-8



This miscellany of historical articles on famous medical pioneers of resuscitation is an excellent read. The authors – two brothers – a Professor of Anaesthetics, and a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and both originating from Belfast, do a whistle-stop tour through the earliest records of resuscitation efforts from Biblical times, right through to cardiac resuscitation and modern technological advances. There were clearly some great characters in the last two millennia – read about keen physicians from diverse and varied parts of the world including

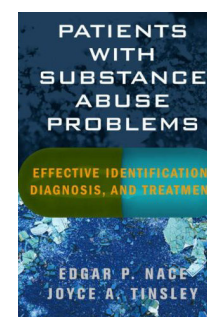
Moritz Schiff and the history of open heart massage, famous resuscitations such as that of Abraham Lincoln, early pioneers including William Harvey, and Andréas Vesalius, and a host of other ‘greats’.

The individual chapters are taken from a series of published papers in the journal *Resuscitation* and have been arranged in chronological order. The summaries and pictures are excellent, and the only criticism I could find is that the font layouts are not entirely all the same – presumably there were journal typesetting changes over the period of publishing the articles in the journal – a small quibble in a truly excellent book.

There are of course some ‘greats’ from Northern Ireland including accounts of Professor Frank Pantridge, and Sir Ivan Magill. Readers from every aspect of medical life will enjoy this book and appreciate how far we have advanced. Particular thanks should go to the Belfast born ‘greats’ for their contribution, and the authors for putting the anthology together in such a readable way.

Patrick J Morrison

Patients with Substance Abuse Problems: Effective Identification, Diagnosis, and Treatment. Edgar P Nace & Joyce A Tinsley. WW Norton & Company, New York, April 2007. 224pp. £14.99. ISBN 978-0-39370-511-9



The global problem of substance abuse has been well documented, yet training and resource allocation in this area is often unsatisfactory. The WHO’s Global Burden of Disease Study (1996) found that alcohol use was the fourth leading cause of disease burden, preceded only by cardiovascular disease, major depression and ischaemic heart disease – all of which can be exacerbated by substance abuse. Research quoted here shows that 14% of Americans are alcohol dependent, and substance abuse is estimated to cost the American economy more than \$200 billion per year. There is a high prevalence of substance dependence in patients with psychiatric disorders and this is typically associated with a poorer prognosis.

This book by two leading psychiatrists in the USA is aimed primarily at non-specialists in primary care and psychiatric practice. It appears to be particularly aimed at those clinicians who have become disheartened and pessimistic about the ability of their patients to recover in the longer-term. The authors are clearly passionate about their work and have produced a very readable and understandable overview of the biopsychosocial model of addiction and how to effectively recognise and treat addiction problems.

A feeling of optimism permeates every section of the book. It begins by highlighting the rapid progress made over the past 20 years in scientific understanding of addiction. This is based very much on the theory of addiction as a disease of the brain, focusing on the dopamine-rich reward pathway. The authors effectively summarise the available scientific evidence